

Response to recent letters from a pro-FDG Leader

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Executive Summary:	2
Introduction:	3
Short synopsis of Letter -1	3
<i>Bhāgavata-dharma</i> means <i>varṇāśrama-dharma</i>	3
Vedas and Vedic culture are <i>apauruṣeya</i> , and not man-made	5
SB 4.12.32 purport is for all Yugas	6
<i>Varṇāśrama</i> or <i>Bhāgavata-dharma</i> – the way to supreme destination	6
Equality of vision and meaning of <i>vyapāśritya</i> per <i>Nārada-pañcarātra</i>	7
Who is “kṛṣṇa tattva vettā?” – from Vedic Scriptures	9
Ācārya and <i>deśa-kāla-pātra</i> considerations – a Half-hen Philosophy	10
Jāhnavā devī was a dīkṣā-guru – ISKCON women can be a dīkṣā-guru.	13
<i>First Establish the Norm - Varṇāśrama</i> , then define Exceptions – qualifications for FDGs	15
Gaudiya Magazine Answers the Jāhnavā-devī example	15
“kṛṣṇa tattva vettā” and <i>Varṇāśrama</i> system	16
Response to Letter -2 from the same writer	18
Define qualifications of exceptions	18
ISKCON Women are not normal women – answered	18
If Śūdra men cannot be a guru how can mlechas and yavanas be a guru? If lower class men can be purified to be a guru why not women be purified and be a guru?	20
Conclusion:	21

Executive Summary:

- Śrīla Prabhupāda states that *Bhāgavata-dharma* is *varṇāśrama-dharma* – Living according to the instructions of the Supreme Lord as given in BG 4.13 is the way to satisfy Kṛṣṇa and create a perfect civilization – purport to SB 6.16.43.
- In his purport to SB 4.12.32 Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions only gender as a disqualification for women to be a Dīkṣā-guru. He did not mention any restrictions of satya-yuga or varṇāśrama.
- The purport to Bhagavad-gītā 9.32 is specific to one becoming a devotee irrespective of kula and linga (gender). There is no context or mention of anyone becoming dīkṣā-guru. Vyapāśritya or one who is fully surrendered (dīkṣā-guru or not) can attain parama-gatī.
- As per Nārada-pañcarātra verses (1.14, 15), anyone (Vyapāśritya) including women are eligible to receive dīkṣā to attain the supreme destination.
- As per Nārada-pañcarātra verses (1.42, 43), women are not eligible to give dīkṣā.
- As per BG 7.3 one who is a “kṛṣṇa tattva vettā” (knower of science of Kṛṣṇa) is rarest of rare. Hence Nārada-pañcarātra Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā verse 1.44 states that such a rare person should have exceptional quality, at the level of a pratyakṣitātma-nātha (self-realized – seeing God face-to-face), to become an ācārya.
- “A pure vaiṣṇava and a pure vaiṣṇavī should not stay together in a secluded place even for moment, being influenced by a duplicitous desire for some "spiritual instructions". Such questions should not arise at all after Śrīman Mahāprabhu instructed us by the example of Choṭa Haridāsa. There is no such śuddhā-vaiṣṇavi like Mādhavī Mātā in the whole world.” – Gaudiya', Vol. 9, #42, p.698, 06.06.1931.
- Even to define the exceptions or qualities of that rare person we must be trained to live in a way to satisfy Kṛṣṇa by creating a perfect civilization based on varṇāśrama or Bhāgavata-dharma system – From Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to SB 6.16.43
- Śrīla Prabhupāda says that one has to purify oneself through varṇāśrama or Bhāgavata-dharma system in order to identify exceptions or qualities of a “kṛṣṇa tattva vettā” – purport to CC Ādi 13.86.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda on ISKCON women like normal women have to follow strī-dharma:
 - Chastity – cites Nala-damayanī as example in lecture to BG 1.40, London, 28-july-1973
 - ISKCON men superior to ISKCON women – MW, Rome, 27-May-1974, RC, New York, 5-March-1975
- If Śūdra men cannot be a guru how can mlechas and yavanas be a guru? If lower class men can be purified to be a guru why not women be purified and be a guru?
 - According to Nārada Pañcarātra male gurus in ISKCON having brahminical symptoms are bona fide gurus even though their birth is outside of Varṇāśrama and whereas women in ISKCON, even though they may have qualities equal to that of those within Varṇāśrama, by virtue of their gender are not allowed to become gurus.

Introduction:

Recently one of the important leaders in our ISKCON movement shared his understanding and realizations about the matter of Female Dīkṣā-gurus in ISKCON and requested many of the ISKCON leaders and devotees to share their comments. That leader shared the understanding in two separate communication although the contents of these two letters overlap each other for the majority parts.

By the order and blessings of some senior disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who do not support the Female Dīkṣā-guru Resolution passed in Oct. 2019 by the GBC, we are attempting this reply to all those points contained in those two letters. As this issue is very sensitive, we will be addressing the root arguments and try to remain away from using words that may hurt feelings of many. Still if some of our words hurts anyone's feelings, we beg forgiveness. Grey Blocks show the original text from the letter. We have replaced some text with anonymous <abc> in order to hide the identity of the persons involved.

Short synopsis of Letter -1

From: xxxx.yyyy@zzzz.com

Date: <dd-mm-yyyy>

Subject: Regarding Yesterday's Meeting

To: Disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda and other devotees

Please accept my humble obeisances.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

First, I have been deliberating on what **XXX** committee told me yesterday, and I got many realizations in the matter:

Response: The basic flow of argument in this letter is:

1. According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāhāprabhu's *kiba vipra* verse any one can become guru
2. Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions that *women are* also included in *kiba vipra* verse
3. So women can become gurus

Bhāgavata-dharma means varṇāśrama-dharma

The beginning statements quoting BG 9.42 from the writer serves only to support the logical flow stated above, reaching to a seemingly pre-determined conclusion. In this response we will try to bring to notice Śrīla Prabhupāda's explanation for Śrī Caitanya Mahāhāprabhu's *kiba vipra* verse and analyse the current letter point by point. Some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports, especially the one to SB 6.16.43, conclusively and holistically explains majority of the questions raised by the writer. We have presented those purports and instructions in this response and we request the readers to carefully note the added emphasis in red text:

Bhāgavata-dharma and *kṛṣṇa-kathā* are identical. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted everyone to become a *guru* and preach the instructions of Kṛṣṇa everywhere from *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the *Purāṇas*, *Vedānta-sūtra* and similar Vedic literatures. Āryans, who are advanced in civilization, follow *bhāgavata-dharma*. Prahlaḍa Mahārāja, although merely a child of five years, recommended:

kaumāra ācaret prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha |

durlabhaṁ mānuṣaṁ janma tad apy adhruvam arthadam || (SB 7.6.1)

Prahlaḍa Mahārāja preached *bhāgavata-dharma* among his classmates as soon as an opportunity was afforded by the absence of his teachers from the classroom. He said that from the very beginning of life, from the age of five, children should be instructed about *bhāgavata-dharma* because the human form of life, which is very rarely obtained, is meant for understanding this subject.

Bhāgavata-dharma means living according to the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In *Bhagavad-gītā* we find that the Supreme Lord has arranged human society in four social divisions, namely *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*. Again, the *Purāṇas* and other Vedic literatures set forth four *āśramas*, which are the divisions of spiritual life. Therefore *bhāgavata-dharma* means the *varṇāśrama-dharma* of the four social and four spiritual divisions.

The members of human society who strictly follow the principles of *bhāgavata-dharma* and live according to the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are called Āryans or *ārya*. A civilization of Āryans who strictly follow the instructions of the Lord and never deviate from those instructions is perfect. Such civilized men do not discriminate between trees, animals, human beings and other living entities. *Paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*: because they are completely educated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they see all living beings equally. Āryans do not kill even a small plant unnecessarily, not to speak of cutting trees for sense gratification. At the present moment, throughout the world, killing is prominent. Men are killing trees, they are killing animals, and they are killing other human beings also, all for sense gratification. This is not an Āryan civilization. As stated here, *sthira-cara-sattva-kadambeṣv aprthag-dhiyaḥ*. The word *aprthag-dhiyaḥ* indicates that Āryans do not distinguish between lower and higher grades of life. All life should be protected. All living beings have a right to live, even the trees and plants. This is the basic principle of an Āryan civilization. Apart from the lower living entities, those who have come to the platform of human civilization should be divided into a society of *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. The *brāhmaṇas* should follow the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic literatures. The criterion must be *guṇa* and *karma*. In other words, one should acquire the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or *śūdra* and act accordingly. This is the civilization accepted by the Āryans. Why do they accept it? They accept it because they are very much eager to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. This is perfect civilization.

Āryans do not deviate from the instructions of Kṛṣṇa, nor do they have doubts about Kṛṣṇa, but non-Āryans and other demoniac people fail to follow the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This is because they have been trained in sense gratification at the cost of all other living entities. *Nūnaṁ pramattaḥ kurute vikarma*: their only business is to indulge in all kinds of forbidden activities for sense gratification. *Yad indriya-prītaya āprṇoti*: they deviate in this way because they want to gratify their senses.

They have no other occupation or ambition. Their method of civilization is condemned in the previous verse. *Kaḥ kṣemo nija-parayoḥ kiyān vārthaḥ sva-para-druhā dharmena*: “What is the meaning of a civilization that kills oneself and others?”

This verse, therefore, advises that everyone become a member of the Āryan civilization and accept the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One should conduct his social, political and religious affairs according to His instructions. We are spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to try to establish a society the way that Kṛṣṇa wants it. This is the meaning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Vedas and Vedic culture are *apauruṣeya*, and not man-made

We shall now proceed to answer the letter point by point:

...Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s dīkṣā-guru. (S.B. 4.12.32, purport)

Concerning this, I am convinced it is true. At the time of Dhruva Mahārāja, there was definitely there the varṇāśrama system that generally a woman could not be a dīkṣā guru.

Response:

In his purport to SB 4.12.32 Śrīla Prabhupāda did not say that in Satya-yuga or under varṇāśrama system woman could not become dīkṣā-guru. Yuga or varṇāśrama is not mentioned as a disqualification but only gender is mentioned as a disqualification.

This statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda is actually the statement of revealed scriptures (śāstras) applicable to all time, all places, and all circumstances. There is no room for any interpretation of this purport. This statement especially matches with *Nārada-pañcarātra*, 1.42, 1.43 which states that at no point of time women can become dīkṣā-guru.¹

Besides that, in the purport to SB 6.16.43 cited above, we find that during satya-yuga (the time of Prahlāda Mahārāja), Śrīla Prabhupāda equates *Bhāgavata-dharma* with varṇāśrama dharma—“*Therefore bhāgavata-dharma means the varṇāśrama-dharma of the four social and four spiritual divisions.*”

It is significant to note that women of satya-yuga, who are endowed with far superior qualities than that of the women of kali-yuga, followed varṇāśrama system that was in place and hence despite their superior qualities they were not considered eligible to become dīkṣā-gurus. Now a question may be raised as to how can we conclude that the women of kali-yuga, that too without varṇāśrama system in place, are eligible to become dīkṣā-gurus?

Such a conclusion would challenge the irrevocable truth that Vedas and Vedic culture are *apauruṣeya*, which means that the norms of the Vedic culture were not thorough and thus there were discrepancies which were gradually rectified as the Vedic culture went on its practical journey. This is the view of modern secular scholars one of whose points is that keeping women in suppression was a discrepancy in Vedic culture which gradually improved over time. They state that in ancient times women were not allowed to do many things, but then different reformers came and made paths for women more liberal.

On similar lines is the claim that in satya-yuga society was male dominant and women were not allowed many things, then Lord Krishna made it more liberal for the women by

¹ na jātu mantra dā nārī—a woman cannot become dīkṣā-guru; and nārhanṭy-ācāryatām kvacit—at no point of time a woman is eligible to become dīkṣā-guru.

giving them equal rights, 5000 years ago and later on Lord Caitanya became even more liberal and thus Jāhnavā-devi could become dīkṣā-guru along with some other ladies like Hemalata Thakurani and Gangamata Gosvami. Thus they contend that what we call Vedic is not exactly definable, because it is constantly changing.

Although it is not implied here that the writer of this letter directly or indirectly subscribes to the above line of thought, it is important to highlight that in the ISKCON world there are certain devotees (and books written by ISKCON devotees) who vouch for Women dīkṣā-gurus purely on the basis of above mentioned line of thought. The writer might have got influenced from such arguments. Furthermore, these modern scholars state that Vedic culture is not eternal, and that the culture followed by Rg Vedins was different and with time there were different amendments made (having different Vedas created in timeline), post which there came the puranic times and so on... Position of women during these times underwent a roller coaster ride.

Some of the devotees argue that such varṇāśrama rules are not meant for devotee women but for non-devotees. Does that mean Suniti was not a devotee? Or Kunti, Yashoda, Rukmini, Devahuti, and many other ladies of Puranic times were not devotees? It would be too big a speculation to think (*kalpanā-gaurava*).

SB 4.12.32 purport is for all Yugas

Besides this, in SB 4.12.32 (Suniti verse) purport, it is to be noted that nowhere in the verse or context comes the topic of qualifications of a guru. But Śrīla Prabhupāda brings this in purport. If this was not meant for ISKCON Women of kali-yuga, then why would Śrīla Prabhupāda mention it in the purport? It is understood that when something specifically comes in the verse or context that is not applicable for Kali-yuga then Śrīla Prabhupāda will address that in the purport establishing that it is not applicable for the present yuga and give an alternative.² Hence, these kinds of interpolations or interpretations relegate the SB 4.12.32 purport to a particular time and circumstance which is clearly not the intention of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Varṇāśrama or Bhāgavata-dharma – the way to supreme destination

Of course, Sunīti was the patha-pradarśaka guru or the śikṣā guru of Dhruva, she also went back to Godhead.

However, after that, 5,000 years ago when Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the Bhagavad-gītā, He mentioned that:

mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ

striyo vaiśyas tathā śūdras te 'pi yānti param gatim

O son of Prthā, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth-women, vaiśyas [merchants], as well as śūdras [workers]-can approach the supreme destination.

(B.G. 9.32)

² For instance, in Bg. 8.11 purport Śrīla Prabhupāda that, although Lord Krishna describes to Arjuna ṣaṭ-cakra-yoga process in devotional service, for current age chanting of Hare Krishna is the process not ṣaṭ-cakra-yoga.

First of all the context of the verse from Bhagavad-gītā (9.32) is specific: how anyone can become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa and not that anyone can become a dīkṣā-guru. In fact in this connection Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his purport to BG 9.14, as cited below:

As described in the second verse of this chapter, not only is this devotional service easy, but it can be performed in a happy mood. One does not need to undergo any severe penance and austerity. He can live this life in devotional service, guided by an expert spiritual master, and in any position, either as a householder or a sannyāsī or a brahmacārī; in any position and anywhere in the world, he can perform this devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus become actually mahātmā, a great soul.

- Purport to BG 9.14

Hence Śrīla Prabhupāda states in his commentaries to several verses of this chapter that one who is guided by an expert spiritual master can attain the highest destination of becoming mahatma by being situated in their own position. In the case of women, it means that they can perform their duty as per strī-dharma, and attain the supreme destination and that there is no need for them to change their roles and responsibilities. In other words just like Arjuna did not change his position as a fighter the women do not need to assume the role of dīkṣā-guru or necessary to undergo any severe austerity, to attain the highest goal of life.

Moreover, Lord Kṛṣṇa states in the verse “*cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam....*,” (BG 4.13) that He is the creator of social and spiritual divisions applicable for all times. This verse (BG 4.13) is again cited within the SB 6.16.43 purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda, instructing us that we have to follow *Bhāgavata-dharma* which is the same system as given by the Lord in BG 4.13:

A Portion of the purport [SB 6.16.43]

...

Bhāgavata-dharma and *kṛṣṇa-kathā* are identical....Āryans, who are advanced in civilization, follow *bhāgavata-dharma*. ...*Bhāgavata-dharma* means living according to the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In Bhagavad-gītā we find that the Supreme Lord has arranged human society in four social divisions, namely *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*. Again, the *Purāṇas* and other Vedic literatures set forth four *āśramas*, which are the divisions of spiritual life. **Therefore *bhāgavata-dharma* means the *varṇāśrama-dharma* of the four social and four spiritual divisions.**

...

Equality of vision and meaning of *vyapāśritya* per *Nārada-pañcarātra*

Continuing further with the purport to BG 9.32, the writer brings out the significance of the word *vyapāśritya*, used in that verse.

It is clearly declared here by the Supreme Lord ... As indicated here by the word *vyapāśritya*, one has to take shelter completely of Kṛṣṇa. Then one can become much greater than great jñānīs and yogīs. (B.G. 9.32, purport)

Lord Kṛṣṇa has told that anyone regardless of their caste, whatever *varṇa* or *āśrama*, they could reach the supreme destination.

Response: Anyone, irrespective of kula, gotra, vamsa, gender, and even animals (Gajendra) are eligible to go back home back to Godhead. As per *Nārada-pañcarātra* verses (1.14, 15)³, anyone including women are eligible to receive *dīkṣā* and that way could reach the supreme destination. Actually, what the writer states about equal vision is nicely explained with reference to Bhagavad-gītā (*Paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*), by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport to SB 6.16.43 as the one who strictly follow the principles of *bhāgavata-dharma* as per the instructions of the Lord that are stated in revealed scriptures:

Portion of the purport [SB 6.16.43]

...

The members of human society who strictly follow the principles of *bhāgavata-dharma* and live according to the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are called Āryans or *ārya*. A civilization of Āryans who strictly follow the instructions of the Lord and never deviate from those instructions is perfect. **Such civilized men do not discriminate between trees, animals, human beings and other living entities. *Paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*: because they are completely educated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they see all living beings equally.** Āryans do not kill even a small plant unnecessarily, not to speak of cutting trees for sense gratification.

...

From the above purport it is very clear that following the *bhāgavata-dharma* is the only way to really achieve the goal of attaining the supreme destination regardless of one's caste, *varṇa* or *āśrama*. But that doesn't mean that one gives up one's *varṇāśrama* duties and take anyone else's duty. In the above society which "strictly follow(ed) the principles of *bhāgavata-dharma*" there were social stratifications and different duties for different people. Arjuna was an āryan, and his wife did not come for fighting on the battlefield nor was Arjuna allowed to take Sannyāsa by Lord Krishna after he surrendered unto Him. He was asked to fight.

So the whole purpose behind *mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya* verse is that one should follow one's *varṇāśrama* duty and surrender unto the Lord. One should not think that "I am just doing the duty of a *sūdra*, or a woman. How can I reach the Supreme destination. I need to change my duty to *Brāhmaṇa*." No. Even doing your own duty, if you surrender to Krishna then you reach the Supreme destination—*sve sve karmaṇy-abhirataḥ siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ*. Hence as per Śrīla Prabhupāda and *śāstras*, we find that even a surrendered soul has to follow the rules and regulations stipulated by revealed scriptures and cannot act beyond those *śāstric* injunctions which is contrary to what the writer seems to suggesting in the letter.

³ *na jāti-bhedaṁ na kulaṁ na līṅgaṁ na guṇa-kriyāḥ | na deśa-kāla nāvasthāṁ yogo hy ayam apekṣate ||14|| brahma-kṣatra-viśaḥ sūdrāḥ striyāś cāntarajās tathā | sarva eva prapadyeran sarva-dhātāram acyutam ||15||*

There is no consideration of birth, family, gender, or quality, work, etc., nor is there consideration of time, place, and circumstance in accepting this yoga process (*pañcarātrika-vidhi*). Anyone, whether they be *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *sūdras*, women, *antyajas*, or anyone else, should, with full faith, take shelter of Lord Acyuta, who is the master of all living entities, through the medium of this yoga.

Who is “kṛṣṇa tattva vettā?” – from Vedic Scriptures

Then, 500 years ago, Lord Caitanya had instructed:

kibā vipra kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene noi, jei kṛṣṇa tattva vettā, sei guru hoi

Whether one is a brāhmaṇa, a sannyāsī or a śūdra-regardless of what he is-he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa. (C.C.Madhya 8.128)

Although Lord Caitanya said “kibā vipra kibā nyāsī” that does not mention directly ladies but Śrīla Prabhupāda applied it to ladies.

Therefore, the qualification to become a spiritual master is to know the science of Kṛṣṇa, regardless of being a śūdra or belong to any varṇa.

Although the writer cites Lord Caitanya’s statement that the qualification to become a spiritual master is to know the science of Kṛṣṇa (“*kṛṣṇa tattva vettā*”). We have to understand this from śāstras that understanding Kṛṣṇa tattva is not such an easy process since it means that one has to be a liberated soul on the level of bhava. Such a person is very rare as stated by Lord Kṛṣṇa in BG 7.3 (*manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścid yatati siddhaye yatatām api siddhānāṁ kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ*). To understand Lord Kṛṣṇa or the science of Lord Kṛṣṇa is very difficult. That is why Śrīla Prabhupāda in his conversation with Prof. O’Connell and Ātreya Rṣi, citing the kiba-vipra verse clearly stated that women have to be perfect to become *dīkṣā-guru* which is very difficult as per BG 7.3. Moreover, in those conversations Śrīla Prabhupāda stated that such perfect women are very rare and not so many which matches with BG 7.3. Furthermore, Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport to SB 6.16.43, states that Lord Caitanya wanted everyone to become a guru according to the instructions of the Lord given in Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-bhāgavatam, and other Vedic scriptures such as *Nārada-pañcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*. Verses 1.37 – 1.44 of *Nārada-pañcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* clearly specifies the guidelines for who can become an ācārya, and in the verse 1.44 it is clearly stated that Women who are at the level of pratyakṣitātma-nātha (self-realized – seeing God face-to-face) alone can become an ācārya. Hence, studying all these important scriptures reveals that only siddha women and not women devotees in general can become an ācārya.⁴ *Pañcarātra* system of *dīkṣā* is the method of initiation given to us by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and later on by Śrīla Prabhupāda to ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda again in his purport to verse 6.16.43 clearly states how we are supposed to actually understand that instruction of Mahāprabhu, as cited below:

Purport [SB 6.16.43]

Bhāgavata-dharma and *kṛṣṇa-kathā* are identical. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted everyone to become a *guru* and preach the instructions of Kṛṣṇa everywhere from Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the *Purāṇas*, *Vedānta-sūtra* and similar Vedic literatures. Āryans, who are advanced in civilization, follow *bhāgavata-dharma*.

Although the writer mentions that Śrīla Prabhupāda applied “kibā vipra kibā nyāsī” to ladies, we have established in the above analysis based on śāstras, that what Śrīla Prabhupāda

⁴ For more detailed exposition on this matter please read “Vaisnava-diksa according to Narada-pancaratra” by Damodara Dasa (BVKS) and Krishna-kirti Dasa (BVKS) at: www.archive.org/details/VDNAP

stated as “not so many” is a direct statement of the revealed scriptures. Moreover, his statements have to be understood as per his instructions in his purport SB 6.16.43 as cited above. Another important point regarding varṇāśrama-dharma that Śrīla Prabhupāda states towards the end of the (same) purport to verse SB 6.16.43, is cited below:

Purport [SB 6.16.43]

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, however, strictly follows bhāgavata-dharma, the instructions of Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam for the complete welfare of human society. One who misinterprets Bhagavad-gītā, twisting out some meaning for his sense gratification, is a non-Āryan.

Hence it has been established that whatever the writer has expressed as questions is very well answered in complete by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to SB 6.16.43.

Ācārya and *deśa-kāla-pātra* considerations – a Half-hen Philosophy

In this regard we can see that Śrīla Prabhupāda, has published a strategy in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta.

It is the concern of the ācārya to show mercy to the fallen souls. In this connection, *deśa-kāla-pātra* (the place, the time and the object) should be taken into consideration. Since the European and American boys and girls in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement preach together, less intelligent men criticize that they are mingling without restriction. In Europe and America boys and girls mingle unrestrictedly and have equal rights; therefore, it is not possible to completely separate the men from the women. However, we are thoroughly instructing both men and women how to preach, and actually they are preaching wonderfully. Of course, we very strictly prohibit illicit sex. Boys and girls who are not married are not allowed to sleep together or live together, and there are separate arrangements for boys and girls in every temple. Gṛhasthas live outside the temple, for in the temple we do not allow even husband and wife to live together. The results of this are wonderful. Both men and women are preaching the gospel of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Lord Kṛṣṇa with redoubled strength. In this verse the words *sabā nistārite kare cāturī apāra* indicate that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to deliver one and all. Therefore it is a principle that a preacher must strictly follow the rules and regulations laid down in the śāstras yet at the same time devise a means by which the preaching work to reclaim the fallen may go on with full force. (C.C. Adi 7.38, purport)

In the above purport, although it is clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda, expertly employed *deśa-kāla-pātra* considerations, we also find that from numerous other purports that Śrīla Prabhupāda never wanted to compromise on the principles of *guru-sādhū-śāstra-vākya* alignment.

In the purport to the verse just before this, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

An ācārya should devise a means by which people may somehow or other come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. First they should become Kṛṣṇa conscious, and **all the prescribed rules and regulations may later gradually be introduced**. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we follow this policy of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. For example, since boys and girls in the Western countries freely intermingle, special concessions regarding their customs and habits are necessary to bring them to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The ācārya must devise a means to bring them to devotional service. Therefore, although I am a sannyāsī I sometimes take part in getting boys and girls

married, although in the history of sannyāsa no sannyāsī has personally taken part in marrying his disciples. [CC Ādi, 7.37 purport]

From the above purport it is clear that although Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted “devise a means by which people may somehow come to Krishna consciousness,” the full picture is that he then wanted to gradually introduce “all the prescribed rules and regulations.” He says that this is the policy of Lord Caitanya which ISKCON is following. However, the writer (and all pro-FDGs) accept only the first part of this policy of devising “means by which people may somehow come to Krishna consciousness,” and leave the later part of gradually introducing “all the prescribed rules and regulations.” This results in half-hen philosophy.

The writer states that for Kali-yuga, Lord Krishna has established equivalence of men and women in devotional service. This is against the version of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

If you see the above purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda also glossed his policy by giving example of intermingling of girls and boys, which means that in the beginning an *ācārya* does not force them to be separate but then gradually teaches his students to adopt the principles of separation of sexes.

Thus if an *ācārya* does not follow the second part of the policy, then he has failed to be an *ācārya* because in the same purport (Cc. 1.7.37) Śrīla Prabhupāda begins by saying:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was an ideal *ācārya*. An *ācārya* is an ideal teacher who knows the purport of the revealed scriptures, behaves exactly according to their injunctions and teaches his students to adopt these principles also.

It should also be noted that the Female dīkṣā-guru issue is not meant to accommodate the new comers but for appeasing those who have already been in Krishna Consciousness for about half a century. If one has not been able to introduce them to rules and regulations even after 50 years then what is the point of being an *ācārya* – *ācārya* means one who “teaches his students to adopt these principles.” Thus, down the line we (the ISKCON leaders) have missed this part of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s adjustment policy – that of introducing all the detailed rules and regulations later. It seems “later” is yet to come (if at all). The temporary adjustments made by Śrīla Prabhupāda have been mistaken by us as permanent yuga-dharmas (not mentioned in any *śāstra*) established by Śrīla Prabhupāda in order to bring people to Krishna Consciousness.

However, just a few verses later (Cc 1.7.48) Śrīla Prabhupāda establishes that an *ācārya* cannot deviate from the principles of *śāstras* and thus demolishes our misunderstanding that he permanently established some new practices as adjustments in order to bring people to Krishna consciousness:

In the paramparā system, the instructions taken from the bona fide spiritual master must also be based on revealed Vedic scriptures. One who is in the line of disciplic succession cannot manufacture his own way of behavior. There are many so-called followers of the Vaiṣṇava cult in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu who do not scrupulously follow the conclusions of the *śāstras*, and therefore they are considered to be *apa-sampradāya*, which means “outside of the *sampradāya*.” Some of these groups are known as āula, bāula, kartābhajā, neḍā, daraveśa, sāṇi, sahajiyā, sakhībhekī, smārta, jāta-gosāñi, ativāḍī, cūḍādhārī and gaurāṅga-nāgarī. In order to follow strictly the disciplic succession of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one should not associate with these apasampradāya communities.

...

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura advises, *sādhū-śāstra-guru-vākya*, *hṛdaye kariyā aikya*. The meaning of this instruction is that one must consider the instructions of the *sādhū*, the revealed scriptures and the spiritual master in order to understand the real purpose of spiritual life. **Neither a *sādhū* (saintly person or Vaiṣṇava) nor a bona fide spiritual master says anything that is beyond the scope of the sanction of the revealed scriptures.** Thus the statements of the revealed scriptures correspond to those of the bona fide spiritual master and saintly persons. One must therefore act with reference to these three important sources of understanding.

[CC Ādi 7.48 purport]

Thus, it is a misunderstanding of the Cc 1.7.38, purport, that it was the published policy of Śrīla Prabhupāda to treat men and women equally in ISKCON forever. Proper understanding is that he had this trick to give them entry to Krishna consciousness and devotee association and then to teach them all rules and regulations from the *śāstras* which includes telling that men and women are not equal and thus do not have equal duties; their duties differ.

Another purport from same chapter (Cc. 1.7.31-32) harmonizes with this understanding, where Śrīla Prabhupāda justifies his engaging boys and girls equally in preaching by saying that “one cannot suddenly change a community’s social customs.” He did not say that one should not change community’s social customs but he expressed impossibility to “suddenly” change them—but certainly they need to be gradually changed as is evident from Cc. 1.7.37 purport. We should not mistake that he was comfortable with western social customs.

Thus, we have to follow the directions given by our Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda, understand and align *guru-vākyas* or *sādhū-vākyas* with *śāstra-vākyas* and understand *śāstra-vākyas* in light of *paramparā-ācārya*’s commentaries or explanations

This also explains why Śrīla Prabhupāda never implemented Women spiritual masters himself and did not even name any women among the eleven rtvik representatives, because it is directly against the *śāstras* and has never been done by previous *ācāryas*. Besides this he did not make a single woman Temple President, or GBC or appointed them on any responsible post. This is because that goes directly against the *śāstras*. Hari-bhakti-vilasa (11.708) says that “one should never appoint a woman on any post.” Tamal Krishna Maharaj recalls that Śrīla Prabhupāda told him that Yamuna devi dasi was very elevated, almost on the level of *bhāva*, and that “if she weren’t a woman, I would make her a GBC.”⁵ Again Śrīla Prabhupāda did not deviate from the *śāstras*.

Regarding Śrīla Prabhupāda’s plan for women’s role in ISKCON:

Prabhupāda: Everything will be satisfied. Just like our women, Kṛṣṇa conscious, they are working. They don’t want equal rights with men. It is due to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are cleansing the temple, they are cooking very nicely. They are satisfied. They never say that “I have to go to Japan for preaching like Prabhupāda.” They never say. This is artificial. So Kṛṣṇa consciousness means work in his constitutional position. The women, men, when they remain in their constitutional position, there will be no artificial

(Morning Walk, May 27, 1974, Rome)

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1utvELWtGzQ>

He did not have plan for travelling preacher women mahā-bhāgavatas. He did accommodate his lady disciples by somehow engaging them according to their modern conditioning, but his plan for future ISKCON women was to train them in traditional roles, which can be understood from his plan to train next generation ISKCON girls (daughters of his disciples):

Prabhupāda: Now our policy should be that at Dallas we shall create first-class men, and we shall teach the girls two things. One thing is how to become chaste and faithful to their husband and how to cook nicely. If these two qualifications they have, I will take guarantee to get for them good husband. I'll personally... Yes. These two qualifications required. She must learn how to prepare first-class foodstuff, and she must learn how to become chaste and faithful to the husband. Only these two qualification required. Then her life is successful. So try to do that. Ordinary education is sufficient, ABCD. This is all nonsense, so big, big, sound education and later on become a prostitute.

...

Educate the girls how to become faithful, chaste wife and how to cook nicely. Let them learn varieties of cooking. Is very difficult? These two qualifications, apart from Kṛṣṇa consciousness, materially they should learn. There are many stories, Nala-Damayantī, then Pārvatī, Sītā, five chaste women in the history. They should read their life. And by fifteenth, sixteenth year they should be married. And if they are qualified, it will be not difficult to find out a nice husband. Here the boys, they do not want to marry because they are not very much inclined to marry unchaste wife. They know it, that "I shall marry a girl, she is unchaste." What do you think?

Brahmānanda: Yes.

Prabhupāda: This is psychology. If woman is chaste, even though she is not very beautiful, she will be liked by the husband. So train them in that way: very chaste, faithful wife and knows how to cook very nicely. Other qualification, even they haven't, that's all right. And Kṛṣṇa consciousness is being trained up. Then there will be no difficulty. And boys should be first-class man. Then our Gurukula will be successful.

>> Morning Walk, July 10, 1975, Chicago

Another evidence to show that Śrīla Prabhupāda was keen on gradually introducing Vedic standards in ISKCON can be understood from his purport to CC *Ādi* 13.86, as cited below:

In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness society, some of the members are very anxious to introduce worship of the śālagrāma-śilā, but we have purposely refrained from introducing it because most of the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement do not originally come from families of the brāhmaṇa caste. After some time, when we find that they are actually situated strictly in the line of brahminical behavior, śālagrāma-śilā worship will be introduced.

[CC *Ādi* 13.86 purport]

Jāhnavā devī was a dīkṣā-guru – ISKCON women can be a dīkṣā-guru.

Continuing with the letter...

When Śrīla Prabhupāda was directly asked by Professor O'Connell, about women to be in the disciplic succession, he gave the following reply:

Yes. Jāhnavā devī was—Nityānanda's wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many. Actually, one who has attained perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained perfection... Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya

(Conversation dated 18 June 1976)

If you want to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda's voice, then you can click the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EDY2I0nv9FjOf6yZQIP9tBHWsH2ZGgD/view?usp=sharing>

Just a side note: the question posed by Prof. O'Connell is about "a guru in the line of disciplic succession," in general; we should understand that it could be understood as referring to patha-pradarśaka-guru or śikṣā-guru and not just dīkṣā-guru. This is not the main point of our contention.

However, even if we take it as dīkṣā-guru, what Śrīla Prabhupāda answered is a direct statement from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā's verse 1.44, which states that a siddha (*pratyakṣitātma-nātha*) person, be he anyone, can become a dīkṣā-guru. The term *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* (siddha or perfected being, seeing God face-to-face) of BS 1.44 is exemplified by the following statement in Śrīla Prabhupāda's conversation with O'Connell: "Jāhnavā devī was Nityānanda's wife." Because She was the consort of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, she was always a *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* and hence for such personalities (male or female) prohibitions mentioned in verses 1.37 to 1.43 do not apply.⁶ The statement, "But not so many," is also true since it is rare for anyone to be situated on *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* level.

In another conversation with Ātreya Rṣi, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that Jāhnavā--devī's case was a very special case:

Prabhupāda: If a woman is perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness... Just like Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife, she was ācārya. She was ācārya. She was controlling the whole Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Rṣi: Lord Nityānanda?

Prabhupāda: Wife. Jāhnavā-devī. She was controlling the whole Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Rṣi: Do you have references about that in any of your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Prabhupāda: I don't think. But there are many ācāryas. Maybe somewhere I might have mentioned. It is not that woman cannot be ācārya. Generally, they do not become. In very special case. But Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as, but she did not declare.

>> Room conversation – 29 June 1972, San Diego.

Here Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly states, "Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife," was an ācārya, which is consistent with his answer in the previously cited conversation with Prof. O'Connell. His statement in this conversation, "It is not that woman cannot be ācārya. Generally, they do not become. In very special case," is perfectly aligned with śāstra-vākya and is consistent with his "But not so many," comment during his interview with Prof. O'Connell. These examples demonstrate that Śrīla Prabhupāda's answers – in his purports, his conversations, or his lectures – to the question on authority of women to initiate, are

⁶ Note: 1.42-43 prohibit devotee women from becoming dīkṣā-guru

perfectly harmonious with one another and with the *śāstra-vākyas*, if we do not neglect his words “reach perfection,” “one who is perfect,” and “very special case.”

First Establish the Norm - Varṇāśrama, then define Exceptions – qualifications for FDGs

So, I was considering that Śrīla Prabhupāda said that anyone if they are qualified, they could serve as a *dīkṣā-guru*. In this issue, you could specify, how one would be qualified? What is the nature of the qualification? Was mention that you accept that if the lady is very qualified you do not mind her to be a *dīkṣā-guru*. Therefore we should define what does this qualification mean. I would also consider the matter and send some suggestions. But in the meantime, if you can consider it.

We already established that only those women who are at the level of Jāhnavā-devī can be eligible for becoming a *dīkṣā-guru*. This is the qualification given by the *śāstras* and the *ācāryas*. How can we as common men define these qualifications. First of all, scriptures such as Nectar of Devotion, clearly describes the qualities of those devotees on the level of Jāhnavā-devī and hence there is very little point in restating or repeating those qualities. Nonetheless, as Śrīla Prabhupāda said that anyone if they are qualified, they could serve as a *dīkṣā-guru* is also true and in order for us to establish those qualifications for such as guru, we need to set the guidelines or norms in our ISKCON society. Prior to this we have understand and realize that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to complete 50 percent of his unfinished mission which is *Varṇāśrama* system. Only after executing this norm of *Varṇāśrama* system we can address and create the guidelines or institutionalize for the exceptional case of female *dīkṣā-gurus*. Moreover, without establishing *Varṇāśrama* system within ISKCON trying to define the qualities for female *dīkṣā-gurus* is akin to the scenario of mis-applying or mis-understanding the unique positions of exalted women of the stature of Jāhnavā-devī. Those who are interested can go over a portion of the purport to CC *Ādi* 13.86, in which Śrīla Prabhupāda cautions us to not consider the situations (pregnancies) of Śacīmātā or Devakī mātā to be same as an ordinary woman becoming pregnant due to sense indulgence. As Śrīla Prabhupāda states in that purport that one must purify one’s heart to come to the transcendental positions, we must purify ourselves by establishing the norm of *Varṇāśrama* system in order to identify men or women who are at the level of *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām*.

Gaudiya Magazine Answers the Jāhnavā-devī example

Question: Are women qualified like men to engage in Bhagavad-bhakti or nor? If they are, then what if some woman by her good fortune becomes a devotee of the Lord (acting according to the dharma of the pure vaiṣṇavas) and wants to serve the Lord and to reside in some Kṣetra or Maṭha, having renounced everything, can she do that or not? And if some woman by such an activity becomes pure vaiṣṇavī, then is it proper for a detached person or a pure vaiṣṇava to receive her association in order to get spiritual instructions?

Answer: Some jīva externally dressed as a woman by her good fortune can take shelter of bhagavad-bhakti and become an advanced devotee (paramā-bhaktimatī), still a man and a woman who are both inclined towards bhagavad-bhakti, should be very careful in their dealings, because the possibility of falldown is inherent in jīva's svarūpa. In Kali-yuga women's qualification for renouncing the family is very rare, even if we say that it is completely absent that would not be an exaggeration. **There are hardly one or two (kvacit dui ekṭi) examples of especially qualified women like Gaṅgāmāta, whose qualification for gr̥ha-tyāga and kṣetra-sannyāsa etc. was always perfect (nitya-siddha), if we accept their capability as a general rule a great disaster will come upon the world.** Women should perform hari-bhajana without duplicity while staying at home. In many holy places women develop different anarthas being driven by very strong desires (vāsanā) that consist of other intentions (anyābhilāṣa) and that are manifested as gr̥ha-tyāga etc. Although everyone is eligible for hari-bhajana, nevertheless everyone should perform hari-bhajana according to one's own qualification remaining in one's own position. If one gives up his position and wants to show his great thirst for hari-bhajana, then one's many varieties of other desires (anyābhilāṣa), lust (kāma), the desire for name and fame and for high position (pratiṣṭhāśā) or divergent endeavors (itara ceṣṭā) become manifest. In this way one falls down from his bhajana.

...

It doesn't matter how much detached a pure vaiṣṇava and a pure vaiṣṇavī can become by residing in Śrī Kṣetra or in Śrīdhāma or by serving the desires of the Lord, they should not stay together in a secluded place even for moment, being influenced by a duplicitous desire for some "spiritual instructions". Such questions should not arise at all after Śrīman Mahāprabhu instructed us by the example of Choṭa Haridāsa. There is no such śuddhā-vaiṣṇavi like Mādhavī Mātā in the whole world.

...

Therefore any detached vaiṣṇava or any person inclined towards bhajana should not in any way associate with women under the pretext of receiving spiritual instructions. Those who are not willing to accept this instruction, are inimical to Mahāprabhu. Mahāprabhu will never see their face. Their only atonement is to die by throwing themselves into the waters of Trivenī. (Gaudiya', Vol. 9, #42, p.698, 06.06.1931).⁷

“kṛṣṇa tattva vettā” and Varṇāśrama system

Continuing with the letter...

Because Lord Caitanya definitely, in His aspect of spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, gave more emphasis to “kṛṣṇa tattva vettā”, than varṇāśrama and that takes priority, that happened more recently.

There are two components to the above statements:

Both *Varṇāśrama* system and “kṛṣṇa tattva vettā” are eternal, and one is created by Lord Krishna for all times irrespective of yugas, and the other is about the science of the Lord. These two have been in practice eternally at all times as stated by Śrīla Prabhupāda, cited below:

Message of Godhead - MoG 2: Karma-yoga

⁷ Source: <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/editorials/03-16/editorials13784.htm>

The various modes of nature are persistent in every corner of the universe, and since brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, and so forth are simply products of the modes of nature, how can one say that the four castes do not exist in a particular part of the world? This is absurd. **In every country and at all times there have been, there are, and there will be the four social orders, according to the modes of nature.**

Those who persist in the theory that the four social orders called the caste system exist only in India are totally mistaken. In all other countries, also, there are the same orders of life, under some name or other. **And thus everywhere in the world, even those who are far below the qualifications of an ordinary śūdra, the fourth social order, are eligible for the transcendental service of the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.**

Now coming to the main point that among *Varṇāśrama* system and “kṛṣṇa tattva vettā” it is true that Lord Caitanya gave more emphasis to “kṛṣṇa tattva vettā,” for the aspect of who can become an ācārya. However, we have already cited the statements from BG and also from purports of Śrīla Prabhupāda, especially from SB 6.16.43, that Lord Caitanya wanted everyone to become a guru according to the instructions of the Lord given in Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-bhāgavatam, and other Vedic scriptures such as *Nārada-pañcarātra* *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* that clearly specifies in verses 1.37 – 1.44 who can become an ācārya.

Also, after Him, Jāhnavā devī was also there. So, we should see what qualifications should be there.

We have already explained it is not advisable for us to institutionalize an exception (*Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.44) as a rule without first establishing the norm of *Varṇāśrama* system within ISKCON.

The existing qualifications of the 10 men committee is very slack. Maybe that it is alright to make Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples guru easily. But, for the future in ISKCON we should have a more robust system for what entails the qualifications to be a dīkṣā-guru. Anyway, I just wanted to share these realizations with you. I do not know what you think. Hope to hear from you.

It is a debatable point that an ācārya (men) cannot be institutionalized. However, even if we agree to this, still Lord Kṛṣṇa gave us the guideline in BG verse 4.13 of determining the varṇa based on guṇa and karma, in order to prevent “free for all” (*prakṛta-sahajaiya*) mess. So for a brahmaṇa there is both guṇa and karma (*paṭhana pāṭhana*) so he can become a guru. But for a female (strī) there may be the guṇa but her karma or dharma is to serve her husband, etc and be not independent and be protected by father, husband, or son. This is exactly why the Lord gave us *Varṇāśrama* system.

I am very encouraged by your conclusion, that we should avoid the hardline, yes/no. We should find a middle ground and establish what actual qualification should be there, that is the point that Śrīla Prabhupāda was stressing. That will ensure “but not so many”. Because they have to be actually qualified and that qualification we can consider. If it is just fighting no, and they are fighting yes...therefore the GBC made the concession that in India or anywhere they can opt-out or they can disapprove any candidate. But even then, there may be loopholes which you are apprehensive about. So, these things could be part of the future discussion, and that will be more productive. This is my humble opinion.

Yours in service,

Response to Letter -2 from the same writer

The following is a second communication in this topic by the same leader. We now attempt to address only those topics that are not addressed already.

Define qualifications of exceptions

From: XXX

Date: <dd-mm-yyyy>

To: XXX

Attached"Original email file"

Subject: VDG

My dear godbrothers,

Please accept my humble obeisances.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

...

I am sending an attached file, with a letter I had sent to the XXX members that meet with me on the VDG issue. I think the letter is self-explanatory, it explains why I think the way I think. As Indian Bureau I think we should suggest ways to make the resolution more faithful to Prabhupada, He said a candidate could be guru, man or woman, should be qualified. I don't think that they have really explained clearly in the resolution what the qualifications should be. When I talk to various godbrothers and devotees who do not like the idea of a woman diksa guru, they all said that if someone is really highly advanced like mother Jāhnavā-devī, they will have no objection. Of course, Jāhnavā-Māta came from the spiritual world. So it is hard to match that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had mentioned that the person should be qualified. I think that making some qualifications and any concerns you have, present that. If we take the hard line and we said no vaisnavis diksa gurus and then devotees in the west stay hardline and say no! it must be vaisnavi diksa guru! It is not a positive alternative.

We understand the writers position on this matter and it has already been addressed in the previous topics and hence the readers are requested to refer to those appropriate sections.

ISKCON Women are not normal women – answered

Actually, I agree with XXX Prabhu, that, according to varnashrama, a woman should not be a guru but these are not normal women, they are vaisnavis.

Yet, Śrīla Prabhupāda did make a clear distinction that men are superior to women in his movement on at least couple of occasions. We have already cited [Morning Walk – May 27, 1974, Rome], [March 5th, 1975 - Room Conversation - New York City], to explain what according to Śrīla Prabhupāda is his expectations of roles for his female Vaiṣṇava disciples.

In another conversation, recorded on this topic with a third person, with a reporter Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

Reporter: Are **men superior** in **your movement**, though?

Prabhupāda: Hm?

Reporter: Are men regarded as superior to women?

Prabhupāda: Yes, naturally. Naturally, woman requires protection by the man. In the childhood she is protected by the father, and youth time she is protected by the husband, and old age she is protected by elderly sons. That is natural.

[March 5th, 1975 - Room Conversation - New York City]

From the question, asked by the reporter, “Are **men superior** in **your movement**?” indicates that the reporter was referring to men and women of ISKCON devotees or *Vaiṣṇavas* or *Vaiṣṇavīs* and not to ordinary men and women. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the idea of roles for *Vaiṣṇavīs* and *Vaiṣṇavas* of ISKCON, much akin and in harmony with Vedic culture. Some devotees who are pro-FDG, cite Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements – for instance, a lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 1.40, London, 28 July 1973 that contains statements such as, “**Of course, when woman ... that position is different. We are speaking of ordinary woman,**” and “**when woman comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that position is different. We are speaking of ordinary woman,**” – to prove that Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly taught us to see the position of devotee woman or *Vaiṣṇavīs* different from that of the position of ordinary women. Let us examine the following excerpt of transcription from that lecture as cited below:

So when we study things from material point of view, these things are to be taken care. But when a man or woman becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious, he or she takes care of herself or himself. So it is spoken... Arjuna is speaking of ordinary woman. *Strīṣu duṣṭāsu*. Just like adharmā-abhibhava. Adharma. If the woman is trained, a girl is trained from the very beginning that: "You should remain chaste," that is dharma. It is called Satītā dharma. Satī means chastity. There are many stories of Satī, chaste woman. Nalā-damayantī. His husband became so poverty-stricken. He was king, but he became later on so poverty-stricken that he had no sufficient cloth. The husband and wife was putting on the same cloth, half and half. So still, still there was no divorce. You see. Still the woman did not consider... She was also king’s daughter. But the husband has fallen down to so much poverty-stricken condition. "So why shall I live with him?" These are some of the extreme examples of chastity. - [Lecture on BG 1.40]

However, a careful examination of that lecture, keeping the contextual information intact, reveals that Śrīla Prabhupāda made that statement only to highlight the facility available for the devotee woman unlike ordinary woman of **going back to home, back to Godhead, without any check**. In no way, Śrīla Prabhupāda is inferring that for a “devotee woman,” the aspect of protection by father, husband, or her elderly son does not apply like it does to an ordinary woman. So by giving the example of Nalā-damayantī, Śrīla Prabhupāda intended here was that a woman who has become Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, be trained in chastity. However, many devotees who are pro-FDG have pulled statements from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s specific parts of the speech away from its context this and tried to establish that Kṛṣṇa conscious women don’t need protection. The point is that, we have to understand such actions have created confusing scenarios for many devotees to get such an impression that

devotee woman are different from ordinary women in the sense that they (devotee women) need not be subjected to following of Strī-dharma.

If these women are not ordinary because they are Kṛṣṇa conscious, then why Kṛṣṇa conscious men in ISKCON are not considered ordinary as well? And why do both males and females in ISKCON fall down, should we make inquiry into all the peccadilloes of the female disciples?

If Śūdra men cannot be a guru how can mlechas and yavanas be a guru? If lower class men can be purified to be a guru why not women be purified and be a guru?

For that matter a sudra should not be a guru, a mlecha or a yavana should not be a guru. But If we are purified by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and devotional service we qualified to be a dikṣa guru. That is my basic understanding. I hope I do not offend any of you. But if you can please see these quotes by Śrīla Prabhupāda and then tell me what to do.

Your servant,

- To put it in simple language:
 - How does one identify a brāhmaṇa?
 - By qualities such as satya, sama, dama, faith in vedas, etc.
 - How does one identify a woman?
 - By gender, a physical symptom.
- If these “men” can be purified by Śrīla Prabhupāda and devotional service can women be not also purified?
 - The answer is certainly yes, they can also be purified. In that case why can such purified women be also qualified to be a dīkṣā-guru?
- Or one may ask that if a woman has brahminical symptoms then why you stop her from becoming guru then?
 - The answer to these questions is that here woman, as a gender, is prohibited from becoming dīkṣā-guru.
- So if you take it by symptoms, then Is being in sattva, rajo, or tamo guna the symptom of a person to decide whether the person is a woman or man?
 - Obviously not. It is the linga or gender, which is a physical symptom. This is why a woman, even if she may be in sattva-guna, is still identified as a woman and thus is prohibited from becoming dīkṣā-guru. In Vedic Culture, the Brāhmaṇis did not become dīkṣā-guru. The famous incidence of wives of brāhmaṇas in 10th canto is our best example. They were much more elevated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness compared to their husbands. Still they did their womanly duties and did not demand that they do yajnas, become gurus, etc. This is a simple vedic culture point. Everyone has their role in society to function.

So no matter how many brahminical qualities a woman may have, she will still be identified as woman, who is not allowed to become dīkṣā-guru according to Nārada Pañcarātra. Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, mlecha, yavanas, antyajhas, dvija-bandhus etc. are all men and they have to follow the guidelines given in *Varṇāśrama-dharma* and their

varṇa is always identified by their qualities or symptoms. Whereas women are always classified separately as Strī and they have to follow Strī-dharma and their varṇa is always determined by the varṇa of their father or husband.⁸ Thus, according to this statement of Nārada Pañcarātra male gurus in ISKCON having brahminical symptoms are bona fide gurus even though their birth is outside of *Varṇāśrama* and whereas women in ISKCON, even though they may have qualities equal to that of those within *Varṇāśrama*, by virtue of their gender are not allowed to become gurus.

Prabhupāda: Everything will be satisfied. Just like our women, Kṛṣṇa conscious, they are working. They don't want equal rights with men. It is due to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are cleansing the temple, they are cooking very nicely. They are satisfied. They never say that "I have to go to Japan for preaching like Prabhupāda." They never say. This is artificial. So Kṛṣṇa consciousness means work in his constitutional position. The women, men, when they remain in their constitutional position, there will be no artificial

(Morning Walk, May 27, 1974, Rome)

Conclusion:

Certainly there has to be more discussion based on guru-sādhū-śāstra-vākya, and we all should take whatever time it takes to come to the right conclusion. For more details on this topic the readers may refer to the book: “Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada Pañcarātra Can a Female Devotee be a Dīkṣā-guru?” Dāmodara Dāsa (BVKS), Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Dāsa (BVKS), Bhakti Vikasa Trust, 2019 from the internet link provided in the reference section below:

Your humble servants

References:

“Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada Pañcarātra Can a Female Devotee be a Dīkṣā-guru?” Dāmodara Dāsa (BVKS), Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Dāsa (BVKS), Bhakti Vikasa Trust, 2019:
https://ia802809.us.archive.org/28/items/VDNAP/VDNAP%20%28Text%29%2021.02.2019%20Cropped,%20DD%20Big%20Page,%202019-12-30,%201130.htm#Part_2

⁸ As we stated before varṇa of women depend on sa-varṇa, asa-varṇa (anuloma or pratiloma) marriage.